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ABSTRACT

The origins of the idea for the Peace Corps are numerous and occurred well before the Kennedy era, but the founding of the Peace Corps is one of President John Kennedy's most enduring legacies. Since the Peace Corps founding in 1961 more than 150,000 citizens of all ages and backgrounds have worked in more than 130 countries throughout the world as volunteers in such fields as health, teaching, agriculture, urban planning, skilled trades, forestry, sanitation, and technology. To allay fears that the Peace Corps would harbor secret agendas or become a tool of the CIA, volunteers are sent only to countries that request their services. Today, any citizen at least 18 years old and in good health can apply. This lesson relates to the power of Congress to make laws (Article I, Sections 7, 8, and 9) and the powers of the chief executive to make appointments and execute the laws (Article II, Sections 2 and 3). As primary source documents the lesson offers Executive Order 10924 in which President Kennedy established the Peace Corps, two photographs of President Kennedy greeting Peace Corps volunteers, and Public Law 87-293 that established the Peace Corps as an independent agency. The lesson correlates to the National History Standards and the National Standards for Civics and Government. It provides historical background (with nine resources); and suggests diverse teaching activities, including an introductory exercise, document analysis, reenact the past, creative writing, investigate and compare, evaluate the historical record, and establish a service organization. (BT)

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ED 462 356

National Archives and Records Administration

THE CONSTITUTION COMMUNITY

Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)

Founding Documents of the Peace Corps

By Joan Brodsky Schur

SO 033 607

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The Constitution Community is a partnership between classroom teachers and education specialists from the National Archives and Records Administration. We are developing lessons and activities that address constitutional issues, correlate to national academic standards, and encourage the analysis of primary source documents. The lessons that have been developed are arranged according to historical era.

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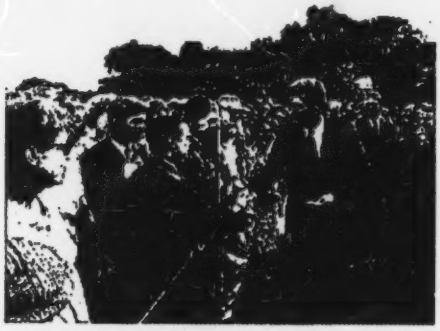

Founding Documents of the Peace Corps

Constitutional Connection

This lesson relates to the power of Congress to make laws (Article I, Sections 7 , 8 , and 9) and the powers of the chief executive to make appointments and execute the laws Article II, Sections 2 and 3).

This lesson correlates to the National History Standards.

Era 9 -Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)

- **Standard 2B** -Demonstrate understanding of United States foreign policy in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America.
- **Standard 3B** -Demonstrate understanding of the "New Frontier" and the "Great Society."

This lesson correlates to the National Standards for Civics and Government.

Standard II.B.2. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions on the importance of voluntarism in American society.

Standard III. B.2. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding major responsibilities of the national government for foreign and domestic policy.

Standard IV. B.2. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions about how United States foreign policy is made and the means by which it is carried out.

Standard V.E.4. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions about the functions of leadership in American constitutional democracy.

Cross-curricular Connections

Share this exercise with your colleagues in history, government, and language arts.

List of Documents

1. Executive Order 10924 in which President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps within the State Department, March 1, 1961. (page 1) (page 2)

2. Photograph of President Kennedy greeting Peace Corps volunteers, August 28, 1961.

3. Public Law 87-293 that established the Peace Corps as an independent agency, September 22, 1961. (page 1) (page 2)

4. Photograph of President Kennedy greeting Peace Corps volunteers, August 9, 1962.

Historical Background

The founding of the Peace Corps is one of President John F. Kennedy's most enduring legacies. Yet it got its start in a fortuitous and unexpected moment. Kennedy, arriving late to speak to students at the University of Michigan on October 14, 1960, found himself thronged by a crowd of 10,000 students at 2 o'clock in the morning. Speaking extemporaneously, the presidential candidate challenged American youth to devote a part of their lives to living and working in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Would students back his effort to form a Peace Corps? Their response was immediate: within weeks students organized a petition drive and gathered 1,000 signatures in support of the idea. Several hundred others pledged to serve. Enthusiastic letters poured into Democratic headquarters. This response was crucial to Kennedy's decision to make the founding of a Peace Corps a priority.

Today if you go to a Peace Corps recruiting office you will see that night commemorated in posters. Since then more than 150,000 citizens of all ages and backgrounds have worked in more than 130 countries throughout the world as volunteers in such fields as health, teaching, agriculture, urban planning, skilled trades, forestry, sanitation, and technology. How did Kennedy transform a campaign pledge into a new agency of the U.S. government? How does the Constitution delineate the legal processes by which a new vision can become a reality? This lesson offers an opportunity to teach students not only about Kennedy and the New Frontier, but also about how our Constitution works.

The origins of the idea for a Peace Corps are numerous and go back long before the Kennedy era. Religious organizations had sent missionaries to remote areas of the world for centuries, not only to preach but to teach trades and build schools. In 1904 the American philosopher William James formulated the idea for a peace army into which young Americans would be drafted in the service of peace rather than war. Since 1917 the American Friends Service Committee has sent Americans to work in refugee camps and to work on community projects. Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps

(1933) put young people to work for their country, and after World War II many private groups like the International Voluntary Service sponsored international work camps.

By 1960 two bills were introduced in Congress that were the direct forerunners of the Peace Corps. Representative Henry S. Reuss of Wisconsin proposed that the government study the idea, and Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota asked for the establishment of a Peace Corps itself. These bills were not likely to pass Congress at the time, but they caught the attention of then-Senator Kennedy for several important reasons.

In contrast to Eisenhower's policy of "dynamic conservatism," which called for the maintenance of existing governmental programs but not the establishment of new ones, Kennedy foresaw a "New Frontier." Inspired by Roosevelt's New Deal, the New Frontier envisioned programs to fight poverty, help cities, and expand governmental benefits to a wide array of Americans. Having won the election of 1960 by a slim majority, Kennedy was only partly successful in pushing his programs through Congress. He revised the minimum wage to cover more workers, increased Social Security benefits, and pushed for the establishment of Medicare. After Kennedy's untimely death, it was left to President Lyndon Johnson to successfully negotiate the passage of new programs such as Medicare through Congress. Johnson's Great Society brought to fruition many of the ideas initiated by Kennedy in the New Frontier.

In foreign affairs Kennedy was also more of an activist than his predecessor. He viewed the presidency as "the vital center of action in our whole scheme of government." Concerned by what was then perceived to be the global threat of communism, Kennedy looked for creative as well as military solutions. He was eager to revitalize our program of economic aid and to counter negative images of the "Ugly American" and Yankee imperialism. He believed that sending idealistic Americans abroad to work at the grass-roots level would spread American goodwill into the Third World and help stem the growth of communism there.

Kennedy lost no time in actualizing his dream for a Peace Corps. Between his election and inauguration he ordered Sargent Shriver, his brother-in-law, to do a feasibility study. Shriver remembered, "We received more letters from people offering to work in or to volunteer for the Peace Corps, which did not then exist, than for all other existing agencies." Within two months of taking office Kennedy issued an executive order establishing the Peace Corps within the State Department, using funds from mutual security appropriations. Shriver, as head of the new agency, assured its success by his fervent idealism and his willingness to improvise and take action. But to have permanency and eventual autonomy, the Peace Corps would have to be approved and funded by Congress. In September 1961, the 87th Congress passed Public Law 87-293 establishing a Peace Corps. By this time, thanks to Kennedy's executive order and Shriver's inspired leadership, Peace Corps volunteers were already in the field.

The Peace Corps was not without its critics. Richard Nixon predicted it would become a haven for draft dodgers. To avoid this possibility, service in the Peace Corps provided young men with draft deferment, but not exemption. To allay fears that the Peace Corps

would harbor secret agendas or become a tool of the CIA, Peace Corps volunteers are sent only to countries that request their services. Today any citizen at least 18 years old and in good health can apply, but he or she will be automatically disqualified for previous work with an intelligence agency.

President Kennedy felt a special bond with Peace Corps volunteers, and he welcomed them to the White House at every opportunity. They came to be known fondly as "Kennedy's kids." In his last State of the Union address Kennedy said, "Nothing carries the spirit of American idealism and expresses our hopes better and more effectively to the far corners of the earth than the Peace Corps." Today, several thousand Americans every year answer his call to "ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country" by serving in the Peace Corps.

Resources

Burner, David. *John F. Kennedy and a New Generation* . Boston: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1988.

Hapgood, David, and Meridan Bennett. *Agents of Change: A Close Look at the Peace Corps* . Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968.

Hoopes, Roy. *The Complete Peace Corps Guide, Third Edition* . New York: The Dial Press, 1966.

Luce, Iris, ed. *Letters from the Peace Corps* . Washington, DC: Robert B. Luce, Inc., 1964.

Reeves, T. Zane. *The Politics of the Peace Corps & Vista* . Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1988.

Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* . Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965.

Shriver, Sargent. *Point of the Lance* . New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964.

The Website of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library at http://www.cs.umb.edu/jfklibrary/

The Web site of the Peace Corps at www.peacecorps.gov .

Teaching Activities

Introductory Exercise

1. Ask students to use their textbooks and other classroom resources to identify the important events of John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign and presidency and when they occurred. Compile this information into a timeline on the board.

Document Analysis

2. Divide the class into groups of three to four students. Provide each group with copies of the four featured documents. Instruct the students to read the executive order and the public law first and add their dates to the timeline on the board. Next, project a transparency with the following questions and ask students to answer them in their groups.

> Why was a Peace Corps established and what were its goals? What can we learn about President Kennedy's style of governing from the documents about the Peace Corps? What powers does Kennedy as president presume to have in the executive order? Does the Constitution provide the chief executive with these powers? Did anyone else need to concur in the executive order? Why would Kennedy have issued it? How was the Peace Corps funded under the executive order? Was it established as a separate entity or under the aegis of an already existing governmental organization? What do the photographs show about when the Peace Corps started to function? Could the Peace Corps have functioned indefinitely under the executive order? What elements in the pubic law demonstrate the constitutional process by which it was passed? How is the Peace Corps established by the executive order different from the one established by public law? What do the photographs tell us about Kennedy's feeling about the Peace Corps and the public response to the idea?

Ask one member of each group to share the conclusions reached by the group.

Reenact the Past

3. According to the Constitution it is the president's job to execute the laws. He or she may do this by delegating authority through the power of appointment. This activity will allow students to experience what it might be like to organize a new government agency -- to put the blueprint of the law into practice.

Divide students into small groups. Inform each group that it has been delegated the responsibility of putting the Peace Corps into action. Like Sargent Shriver and his staff, students will need to figure out how to recruit, train, place, and supervise the first Peace Corps volunteers.

Before students begin, brainstorm with the class the types of problems they will have to solve. Ask: Who should be recruited and on what basis? What countries should receive volunteers and why? What potential problems and conflicts might arise either between U.S. governmental agencies (e.g., the Peace Corps and State Department), or between the U.S. government and a country where a volunteer is placed?

Ask each group to present its plans to the entire class. Based on the presentations, ask the class to decide which group presented the most feasible plan.

Creative Writing

4 . Ask pairs of students to invent identities for themselves as family members (e.g., brother/sister, mother/son) living through the years 1962 and 1963. Direct one student to imagine being a Peace Corps volunteer and the other to imagine being a family member in the United States. Instruct students to write letters to each other. In Letter 1 the volunteer will write home about his or her training and placement in a host country. In Letter 2 the family member will react to this letter and reply with news about what is happening in the United States in 1962. In Letter 3 the volunteer will write home about his or her accomplishments and frustrations in the host country. In Letter 4 the family member will respond and describe events in the United States in 1963.

5. Ask students to imagine being a Peace Corps volunteer in one of the featured photographs. Suggest that they have just met PresidentKennedy and are about to take on their first assignments as volunteers. Direct students to write a diary entry of that never-to-be-forgotten day.

Investigate and Compare

6. With your students, call the nearest Peace Corps office or visit the Peace Corps Web site at www.peacecorps.gov to find out what the Peace Corps does today. Arrange to have a former volunteer speak to your class. Join the World Wise Schools Program through which your class can correspond with a volunteer who is currently in the field.

After students become familiar with what the Peace Corps does today, lead a class discussion in which students evaluate and compare the original mission of the Peace Corps as expressed in the featured documents with its accomplishments today. Ask: How successful has it been? Which of its three main goals has it met most effectively? Least effectively?

Evaluate the Historical Record

7. Ask each student to write an essay that defines the term "New Frontier," describes the ways the Peace Corps exemplified the goals and methods of the New Frontier, and evaluates and ranks the importance of the Peace Corps in Kennedy's legacy.

8. Ask students to research and compare the structure and accomplishments of VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) to those of the Peace Corps. VISTA was founded under President Johnson's "Great Society" and it was modeled on the Peace Corps.

Establish a Service Organization

9. Divide the class into teams of three to four students. Ask each team to establish their own organization modeled on the Peace Corps concept of people-to-people hands-on help. Remind students that what makes the Peace Corps unique is that it is a government-sponsored volunteer program. Ask students to envision other government-sponsored volunteer programs. Instruct students to write their proposals in the form of a bill to be submitted to Congress. Students can use the public law in this lesson as a model.

Encourage students to submit their bills to a Model Congress if your school participates in one, or to write or e-mail their representatives about their ideas. E-mail addresses for congressional representatives are available from the House of Representatives Web site at http://www.house.gov./

The documents included in this project are from Record Group 11, the General Records of the United States, and from the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. They are available online through the National Archives Information Locator (NAIL) [http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html] database, control numbers NWCTB-11-PRDOC-P1159E31-EO10924, NLK-WHP-AR-AR6760A, NWCTB-11-LAWS-P1159E6-PL87(293), and NLK-WHP-AR-AR7405D. NAIL is a searchable database that contains information about a wide variety of NARA holdings across the country. You can use NAIL to search record descriptions by keywords or topics and retrieve digital copies of selected textual documents, photographs, maps, and sound recordings related to thousands of topics.

This article was written by Joan Brodsky Schur, a teacher at Village Community School in New York, NY.

EXECUTIVE ORDER

ESTABLISHMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE PEACE CORPS
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Mutual Security Act of 1954, 68 Stat. 832, as amended (22 U.S.C. 1750 et seq.), and as President of the United States, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Establishment of the Peace Corps. The Secretary of State shall establish an agency in the Department of State which shall be known as the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps shall be headed by a Director.

Section 2. Functions of the Peace Corps. (a) The Peace Corps shall be responsible for the training and service abroad of men and women of the United States in new programs of assistance to nations and areas of the world, and in conjunction with or in support of existing economic assistance programs of the United States and of the United Nations and other international organizations.

(b) The Secretary of State shall delegate, or cause to be delegated, to the Director of the Peace Corps such of the functions under the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended, vested in the President and delegated to the Secretary, or vested in the Secretary, as the Secretary shall deem necessary for the accomplishment of the purposes of the Peace Corps.

Section 3. Financing of the Peace Corps. The Secretary of State shall provide for the financing of the Peace Corps with funds available

Document 1: Executive Order 10924 in which President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps within the State Department, March 1, 1961, page 1.

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to the Secretary for the performance of functions under the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended.

Section 4. Relation to Executive Order No. 10893. This order shall not be deemed to supersede or derogate from any provision of Executive Order No. 10893 of November 8, 1960, as amended, and any delegation made by or pursuant to this order shall, unless otherwise specifically provided therein, be deemed to be in addition to any delegation made by or pursuant to that order.

THE WHITE HOUSE,

March 1, 1961.

THE [illegible] SERVICE
AND ACCURACY IN SERVICE
FILED AND MADE AVAILABLE
FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION
MAR 1 12 28 PM '61
IN THE OFFICE OF THE
FEDERAL REGISTER

10924

Document 1: Executive Order 10924 in which President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps within the State Department, March 1, 1961, page 2.

Document 2: Photograph of President Kennedy greeting Peace Corps volunteers, August 28, 1961.

[PUBLIC LAW 87-293]

H. R. 7500

Eighty-seventh Congress of the United States of America

AT THE FIRST SESSION

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday, the third day of January, one thousand nine hundred and sixty-one

An Act

To provide for a Peace Corps to help the peoples of interested countries and areas in meeting their needs for skilled manpower.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

TITLE I—THE PEACE CORPS

SHORT TITLE

SECTION 1. This Act may be cited as the "Peace Corps Act".

DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

SEC. 2. The Congress of the United States declares that it is the policy of the United States and the purpose of this Act to promote world peace and friendship through a Peace Corps, which shall make available to interested countries and areas men and women of the United States qualified for service abroad and willing to serve, under conditions of hardship if necessary, to help the peoples of such countries and areas in meeting their needs for trained manpower, and to help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served and a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people.

AUTHORIZATION

SEC. 3. (a) The President is authorized to carry out programs in furtherance of the purposes of this Act, on such terms and conditions as he may determine.

(b) There is hereby authorized to be appropriated to the President for the fiscal year 1962 not to exceed $40,000,000 to carry out the purposes of this Act.

DIRECTOR OF THE PEACE CORPS AND DELEGATION OF FUNCTIONS

SEC. 4. (a) The President may appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, a Director of the Peace Corps, whose compensation shall be fixed by the President at a rate not in excess of $20,000 per annum, and a Deputy Director of the Peace Corps, whose compensation shall be fixed by the President at a rate not in excess of $19,000 per annum.

(b) The President may exercise any functions vested in him by this Act through such agency or officer of the United States Government as he shall direct. The head of any such agency or any such officer may promulgate such rules and regulations as he may deem necessary or appropriate to carry out such functions, and may delegate to any of his subordinates authority to perform any of such functions.

(c) (1) Nothing contained in this Act shall be construed to infringe upon the powers or functions of the Secretary of State.

(2) The President shall prescribe appropriate procedures to assure coordination of Peace Corps activities with other activities of the United States Government in each country, under the leadership of the chief of the United States diplomatic mission.

(3) Under the direction of the President, the Secretary of State shall be responsible for the continuous supervision and general direc-

THE WHITE HOUSE RECEIVED SEP 2 1 1961

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION RECEIVED SEP 22 11 51 OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR MAIL SECTION

Document 3: Public Law 87-293 that established the Peace Corps as an independent agency, September 22, 1961, page 1.

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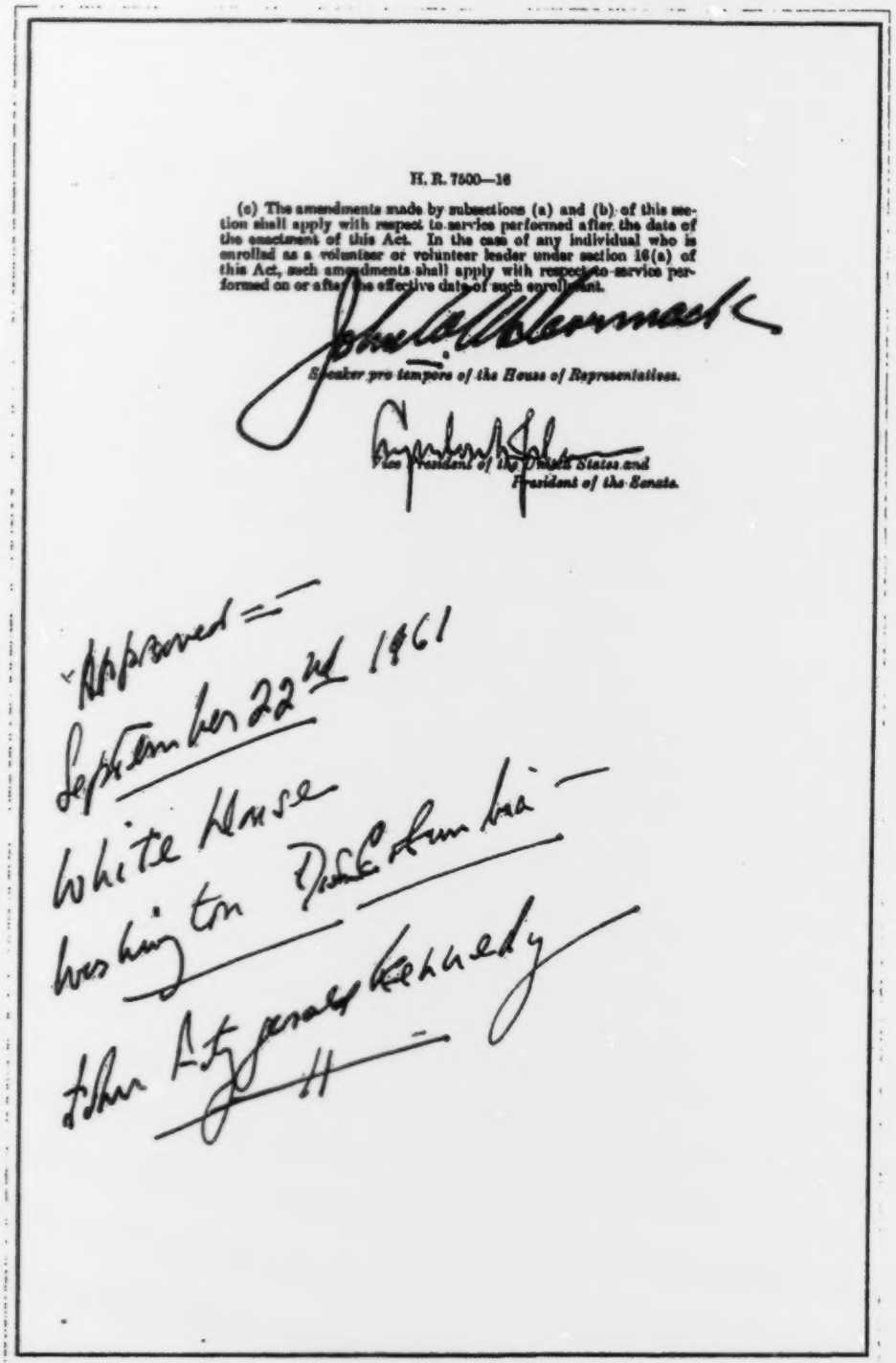

H. R. 7500—16

(c) The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) of this section shall apply with respect to service performed after the date of the enactment of this Act. In the case of any individual who is enrolled as a volunteer or volunteer leader under section 16(a) of this Act, such amendments shall apply with respect to service performed on or after the effective date of such enrollment.

Speaker pro tempore of the House of Representatives.

Vice President of the United States and President of the Senate.

Approved —
September 22nd 1961
White House
Washington D.C.
John F. Kennedy

Document 3: Public Law 87-293 that established the Peace Corps as an independent agency, September 22, 1961, page 2.

Document 4: Photograph of President Kennedy greeting Peace Corps volunteers, August 9, 1962.